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Talking together: exploring the impact of Group Talk activities on the confidence and attainment in speaking German with a Year 8 class

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Abstract

Spontaneous speech and interaction in the target language are emphasized by the recent National Curriculum and GCSE. Yet speaking is often the skill second language learners find the most difficult. "Group Talk" allows pupils to exchange opinions and debate, giving opportunities for spontaneity and interaction. Following principles of Action Research over six lessons, this project explores the implications of introducing Group Talk activities into the classroom. The results suggest some pupils' confidence and attainment in speaking improved, through small-group work and increased practice. However, groupings and the social environment became problematic for others. The intervention also showed how perceptions of competence and confidence are intertwined. It can be challenging to implement Group Talk, but if done with care and reflection, it can provide the opportunity for pupils' voices to become a normal part of classroom discourse, giving them the confidence and ability to speak.

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Introduction

"For many pupils, the prime goal of learning a foreign language is to be able to speak it." (Grauberg, 1997, p.201). However, even if oral communication is the central aim of language learning for pupils, it is often the skill second language (L2) learners find most difficult. This has certainly been my experience, both as a language learner and when observing pupils in classrooms as a trainee teacher. The reasons for this are complex, but Macintyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998) propose that self-confidence and the social context in particular play a key role in a learner's "willingness to communicate" (WTC) in an L2 (p.588). Learners need to have the confidence to make an utterance in the target language (TL) and this confidence may be affected, positively or negatively, by the social context of their learning.

Macaro (1997) argues that the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) classroom in an English secondary school is inauthentic (p.67), where it is difficult to communicate in a real or meaningful way. Using a foreign language in the classroom is not the same as using it in "real life", nor are foreign languages "natural" to the classroom environment as Grauberg (1997, p.201) and Mitchell (1996, p.107) also highlight. Teachers desiring to work within a communicative framework are thus faced with the challenge of working in an artificial environment and providing opportunities for genuine communication.

"Group Talk" is an approach which seems to offer a way to reduce the artificiality of classroom communication by creating a relaxed, collaborative social context where pupils have the confidence to participate. It engages learners "through a more dynamic and spontaneous use of language" (Fuller, 2010, Slide 17) and is characterised by pupils sitting around small tables and interacting in groups (CPD College, 2015). To simulate real conversation, pupils give their opinions and debate a wide variety of relevant topics using elements of colloquial language: "*'Ni hablar!' 'Du spinnst!'*

'Tu rigoles!' is the language of Group Talk at its animated best" (Fuller, 2010, Slide 17). Group Talk was first implemented by Wildern School in Hampshire who were dissatisfied with "traditional formulaic speaking activities" (Fuller, 2010, Slide 17) but wanted to improve students' speaking skills, namely, their spontaneity and motivation to participate. The resulting award-winning project was endorsed at the time by Ofsted as an example of good practice, and publicised on Teachers TV (Ofsted, 2012). The teachers behind the project, notably Greg Horton, claim the approach improved achievement generally, especially in speaking, and particularly for boys (CPD College, 2015).

KS3 pupils need to be able to develop and justify "points of view in speech and writing, with increased spontaneity, independence and accuracy" (DfE, 2013), according to the 2013 National Curriculum (NC). Spontaneity is seen here as a measure for attainment in MFL. In addition, pupils should be able to "initiate and develop conversations" with understanding of social conventions (DfE, 2013), suggesting a requirement for TL interaction. A focus on spontaneity and interaction in speaking is further promoted by the GCSE MFL specification, where pupils "develop their ability and ambition to communicate with native speakers in speech and writing" (DfE, 2014). So that students are well prepared for GSCE examinations, teachers need to implement strategies which develop spontaneity and interaction, which, from my own observations and practice, is no easy task.

In a Group Talk environment, it seems that pupils have the desire to communicate and the opportunity to interact spontaneously. Considering this, and the requirements of the NC and GCSE specification, I decided to introduce Group Talk activities into a Year 8 German classroom during my training year. Promoting spontaneity and interaction in speaking from the early stages of language learning may prepare pupils better to take a GCSE in MFL. The intervention took place in an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school in Suffolk, and I particularly wanted to explore the impact the Group Talk activities had on confidence and attainment in speaking. This paper will outline my investigation, discussing the literature, research methodology and findings. I will finally discuss the results of this investigation and come to some tentative conclusions.

Literature Review

This section explores the issues raised by Group Talk in more depth by reviewing the literature. Firstly, it looks at how to define Group Talk, then the importance of spontaneity and interaction in

spoken language is evaluated. Planning for speaking is discussed. It then shows how constructivist theories provide the basis for group talk and work. Finally, issues surrounding confidence are explored. The findings from the literature provide a basis for the research questions.

Defining Group Talk

Group Talk, according to Fuller, has five key elements:

- "only the **target language** is spoken
- interaction between a small **group** of pupils
- tasks demand opinion, conjecture and debate
- responses are spontaneous
- there is no set finishing time"

(Fuller, 2010, Slide 18)

Fuller, an MFL practitioner, created an online presentation intended to support and inform the practice of other MFL teachers and "to promote discussion of how to encourage spontaneous use of language in MFL lessons" (Fuller, 2010). His description of Group Talk seems to stem from Wildern School's experiences. Hawkes similarly is an MFL practitioner and took part in the 2012 Language Show discussing the nature of "Classroom Talk." This presentation outlines various Group Talk activities created by other practitioners which are available through the Times Educational Supplement (Hawkes, 2012, Slide 34). Using Wildern School's Group Talk progression chart, she shows how Group Talk develops across four stages:

- "Stage 1: Introducing and responding to simple opinions
- Stage 2: Taking part in a short discussion
- Stage 3: Exchanging reasons and preferences, talking across time frames
- Stage 4: Developing a line of thought, sharing points of view, balancing an argument"

(Hawkes, 2012, Slides 43-48)

For Hawkes, "student-student talk" is just one element of successful classroom talk, but can be planned effectively into lessons (Hawkes, 2012, Slide 49). Fuller, Hawkes and Wildern School's work suggest the following definition of Group Talk: characterised by small-group work, Group Talk improves spontaneity and interaction in the TL through pupil exchange of opinions and debate.

Activities are carefully planned and implemented by teachers, and Group Talk offers improved confidence and attainment in speaking a foreign language.

Spontaneity and Interaction in speaking

Spontaneous speech is promoted by the NC and GCSE specifications, and is a hallmark of everyday communication. However, as Christie (2016, pp.74-75) outlines, there is a conflict between spontaneity and examination. When teachers are held accountable for results, they are more likely to encourage pupils to carefully rehearse spoken language. This results in more accurate and complex production, but removes spontaneity. This does not mean, however, that spontaneous talk cannot be taught; in fact, Christie (2016) argues the opposite. To talk spontaneously, learners must first be able to access the language they require and then be motivated to communicate. For Christie, this requires 'proceduralised' knowledge: if learners know how to use language, they can access and use TL "in the moment". Therefore, if language chunks, such as lexical items, are used regularly in "real operating conditions", learners do not need to rely as much on memory (2016, p.75). As a result, language output becomes quicker and pupils can be spontaneous in their speech (ibid.). As Group Talk uses flash-cards and conversation models, it may enable such 'proceduralisation'. Further, pupil creativity is encouraged and language is not carefully prepared beforehand, promoting spontaneous talk.

In a case study of a Year 7/8 and a Year 10/11 top set French class, Christie (2016, p.79) also shows that a TL ethos, where both teacher and learner use the TL for communication, supports spontaneity. This seems particularly true for the Year 10/11 top set French class, where 38% of all turns were spontaneous, in comparison to 12% in the Year 7/8 class. Nonetheless in the Year 7/8 French class only 5% of spontaneous turns included English, suggesting, at least, that it is possible for Year 7/8 to speak spontaneously in the TL given the right environment. Group Talk focusses on both teacher and pupils using the TL for communication.

As a learning process which is supported by a collaborative, group-work environment (Macaro, 1997, p.165), interaction is a key feature of communicative language teaching (CLT) and genuine conversation (Pachler, Evans, Redondo & Fisher, 2014, p.121). In addition, it is an assessment criterion, for example at GCSE (AQA, 2015a). However, according to Macaro (1997), for true collaboration and thus successful interaction, the teacher's role needs to change from transmitter of knowledge to facilitator of learning (p.134). This can be challenging for teachers, and as part of the

empirical study, the "Tarclindy Project", carried out between 1993 and 1995, Macaro observed that learning tended to be teacher-centred rather than learner-centred, with little change from Mitchell's study in the mid-1980s (p.152). My observations and experience in two English secondary schools suggest this is still often the case. The reasons for this are varied: time constraints, a focus on teacher TL, and a belief that collaborative learning has social, behavioural and pedagogic functions, but not linguistic functions (p.165). From Macaro's research it seems that classrooms are often not collaborative, but that collaboration does aid more effective pupil TL interaction. A central aim of Group Talk is to focus on "pupil's ability to interact in the target language" (CPD College, 2015). By promoting collaboration, it could improve interaction. However, it is unlikely that all pupils will interact equally. Macaro highlights the tension between participation and interaction: participation can indicate interaction, but attentive listening, which is difficult to measure, is also necessary. In addition, it is not clear whether more interaction results in higher achievement (Macaro, 1997, pp.143-144). Still, collaborative work does provide an opportunity for interaction (p.144) and given its role in the NC, it would seem important for teachers to pursue.

Spontaneity and interaction, although desirable, cannot occur, according to Pachler et al. (2014) without structure and scaffolding. Learners first need to practise pronunciation, use and understand vocabulary, before moving to open-ended activities. Discussion and debate can be beneficial "depending on the level of the learners", (p.242) but they do not discuss the place of group work for speaking in depth beyond working in pairs. Cue cards and information gap activities are forms of scaffolding which allow pupils to use new vocabulary and structures for communication (p.241). Working on a similar basis of progression and scaffolding, Smith and Conti (2016) highlight the benefit of 'Kagan Structures' for pair and group work which can promote cooperative learning (p.33). For example, "Rally Robin" encourages pupils to say sentences until the activity finishes. They seem to suggest that games can engage reluctant language learners. According to their experience, paired activities are to be preferred as students speak more and are less likely to become distracted (p.34). Both teacher-led and student-led oral work can be beneficial, so an approach which "mixes it up" and adds variety to lessons is promoted (ibid.). They believe beginners are more responsive to a teacher-led approach, whereas older, intermediate learners may prefer pair-work (p.34). However, Wildern School's experience of Group Talk suggests it can be effective for learners of all ages. Improved GCSE speaking results were attributed in part to the introduction of Group Talk while pupils were beginners (CPD College, 2015).

Mitchell, while also encouraging a progression from structured to free, shows the value of unstructured conversation: "Occasionally it is even worth turning the task around and asking the pupils in groups of three or four to have a conversation in the target language about anything they like" (1996, p.114). He exemplifies this with a beginner Year 7 class, which, although the context was different, suggests that Wildern School's experiences are not without precedence. Mitchell further claims that his progression from teacher-input to student interaction can "help create a confident atmosphere where the foreign language is seen as a natural way of communicating important messages" (p.114). Group Talk, introduced with careful scaffolding and support, may allow pupils to interact confidently with spontaneity, which is likely to impact positively on attainment.

Constructivism and group work

The above practitioners and researchers suggest the positive impact of group work on attainment in MFL, and there is a strong theoretical basis for this generally in education, through constructivism. In this approach, human beings *construct* knowledge through discovery, while in contrast, behaviourism focuses on controlling *behaviour* to ensure the acquisition of knowledge, e.g. through rote learning. Piaget and Vygotsky are two key figures in constructivism, and Westgate and Corden (1993, p.116) show that small-group talk was promoted during the 1970s and 80s due to the constructivist belief that talk is essential to cognitive processes and thus to learning. In a research paper discussing group work in science classrooms, Fung and Lui (2016, p.1059), show that Piaget's theory, which emphasises the "importance of the interaction of social, affective and cognitive states", supports the use of group work in the classroom. Similarly, Coultas (2015, p.82) a former Head of English and current teacher educator, makes the case for pupil talk and small-group learning by arguing from a Piagetian and sociocultural view of learning. Vygotsky, in building on Piaget's work, further describes learning as "fundamentally social in nature" (Moore, 2012, p.28). The work of Piaget and Vygotsky provides indications that group work is important to successful learning, a premise upon which Fung and Lui (2016) as well as Coultas (2015) work, despite their contrasting social and educational contexts.

Willingness to communicate and confidence

Participation in group tasks, or any task in the classroom, is a result of some sort of motivation on the part of the learner, be it from within or without. In his overview of L2 motivation research, Dörnyei (2003) highlights the value of a "situated approach" to understanding motivation, that is, examining how different aspects of the learning environment impact motivation. One of these research directions is the study of the "willingness to communicate (WTC)" (p.12).

WTC differs from communicative competence, instead it focusses on how *willing* or motivated L2 learners are to speak the TL. To reach the point of communication, learners are influenced by "immediate situational factors as well as more enduring influences" (Macintyre et al., 1998, p.546). Enduring influences such as personality are long-term, stable properties, whereas situational influences, such as "State Communicative Self-Confidence," are context-dependent and therefore transient. Macintyre et al. differentiate between state self-confidence and trait-like self-confidence. State self-confidence is viewed as one of the most "immediate determinants of WTC" (p.549) and it focusses on feelings of confidence in a moment given a particular communicative situation. It has two components: "state anxiety" and "state perceived competence" (Macintyre et al., 1998, p.549). Increased state anxiety is correlated with reduced self-confidence and therefore reduced WTC. Macintyre et al. name several factors which may increase anxiety, including intergroup tension and an increased number of people listening (p.549).

In her focus group based research exploring motivation in group tasks in Macau, China, Eddy-U (2015) shows that individual learners' WTC significantly impacts the effectiveness of group tasks. Self-confidence was both a motivator and demotivator for students, especially in relation to language anxiety and the fear of making mistakes (p.50). Despite the limitations of the study, and the different cultural environment, this suggests that small groups alone may not reduce language anxiety. However, pupils at Wildern School did report increased confidence due to Group Talk (CPD College, 2015). State perceived competence may be a factor here, as the more pupils practise a skill, in this case speaking, the more likely they are to feel competent in it. Still, there are aspects of the social and physical environment which impact the success of group work. If group work is implemented successfully, it would seem well placed to help create an environment of reduced state anxiety, and thus increased confidence.

The impact of the social and physical environment

Group work is a social activity and each participant is responsible for their own contributions and attitudes. Within their framework of "cooperative learning," Johnson and Johnson (2009, p.369) show that students need to be taught interpersonal and small-group skills to succeed in group work: they cannot automatically work together. Nonetheless, different groupings can greatly impact how able students feel to participate. Grauberg (1997, p.202) proposes that "speaking to learn can turn into speaking to communicate when the teacher can tap into two of pupils' natural desires: to be sociable with friends through talk and games and to express themselves." Grouping pupils with friends and allowing them to talk about their own opinions and experiences may reduce feelings of anxiety.

However, having responsibility for pupil progress means teachers must also consider whether students are challenged and supported as appropriate to their strengths and weaknesses. In their discussion of differentiation, experienced practitioners Smith and Conti (2016, p.164) suggest that teachers vary groupings to take different abilities and personality types into account. They further suggest avoiding groups with more than one challenging pupil, and having mixed-sex groups. From a contrasting perspective, Gillies and Boyle's quantitative research (2010) suggests grouping by friendship is potentially motivating, but the research evidence is "equivocal" (p.936). Their research into how cooperative learning is implemented, however, does support Smith and Conti's implicit claim that different approaches are suitable at different times. Strategies for group formation included: mixed gender, random, friendship-based and ability. Gillies and Boyle also discuss the optimal group size, and drawing on Lou et al.'s research, they propose that mixed-ability groups of 3-4 pupils seem to promote more successful learning (ibid.).

The physical environment may also impact the success of group work. In the Group Talk project, classrooms were large and arranged with group tables, instead of the traditional row-based classroom. Such a layout is teacher-centred, promoting interaction between teacher and pupil, but not between peers (Oxford, 1997, p.451). As Oxford continues to explain, this may be comforting for the pupil who wants to avoid interaction, but a pupil is perhaps more likely to be 'picked on' by a teacher and therefore become more anxious (p.452). She proposes a circular or semi-circular arrangement to encourage pupil interaction.

Research Questions

Emergent from the theoretical literature is a picture of group work as not only beneficial to external factors of learning, but also as facilitating learning. Group work seems to support interaction in the TL and provide opportunities for spontaneity, both aspects of assessment of speaking. However, consideration needs to be given to scaffolding and the progression of activities, otherwise pupils will not have the language required to interact spontaneously. WTC is required to participate in tasks, and a significant factor of this is state self-confidence, affected by state anxiety and state perceived competence. By changing the physical and social environment, elements which may cause state anxiety could be reduced. This is what Group Talk as I understand it attempts to do. When pupils give opinions and debate with their peers, they engage in meaningful communication which seems likely to improve their interaction and spontaneity, both indications of 'real-life' discourse. Therefore, one aspect of the artificiality of the classroom situation is reduced. Creating a collaborative, cooperative environment may reduce anxiety and pupils would become more willing to communicate, because they are more confident. By implementing Group Talk activities, I hope to explore the impact of these activities on confidence and attainment in speaking. To do this, I will address the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent do group talk activities impact confidence in speaking?

RQ2. To what extent do group talk activities impact attainment in speaking?

Research Design

My Action Research Project introduced Group Talk activities into a Year 8 German classroom in an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school, where pupils begin German in Year 8. Initial observations of this second-set class suggested that pupils lacked confidence in using the TL for communication. Certain pupils participated well, but others typically remained silent in whole class discussion. I observed one lesson with a reading and writing focus, where the only pupil TL used was for greetings. This suggested that increasing opportunities for spontaneity and interaction by focussing on speaking could be beneficial. In addition, most lessons I had observed with the class had been teacher-led, with little group work. Introducing Group Talk activities would promote independent and collaborative learning, important given the demands of the new GCSE. However, this focus on speaking did conflict somewhat with the scheme of work (SoW), as at the end of the term pupils

had to complete a writing and translation assessment. In my research, I looked specifically for evidence of the impact of the activities on confidence in speaking and attainment in speaking. In this section, I outline my research design.

As Denscombe outlines (2010, p.6), Action Research methodology allows practitioners to reflect on and refine their own practice systematically, by implementing change, enhancing knowledge and improving practice (Denscombe, 2010, p.128). Group Talk activities were introduced over six lessons and the data collection methods displayed in Table 1 addressed each research question.

Research Question	Research Method
RQ1: To what extent do group talk activities impact on confidence in speaking?	1. Pre- and post-intervention attitudinal questionnaire 2. Post-intervention reflective questionnaire 3. Group interviews
RQ2: To what extent do group talk activities impact on attainment in speaking?	1. Mid-intervention recording of one group 2. Final assessment of each group 3. Progress data

Table 1: Research questions

I considered methods which would facilitate understanding of the multi-faceted classroom. These cannot provide a complete picture of all the complexities and conflicting narratives arising in a classroom, however, through a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches, I hope to interpret the effects of my intervention. Denscombe emphasises that small-scale studies demand qualitative research methods, as these offer a holistic perspective, and involve the researcher in line with principles of Action Research (p.238). A mixed-methods approach further provides the opportunity for data triangulation, where research is validated by different perspectives (Evans, 2009, p.120). In general, I used qualitative data to gain fuller insight into phenomena suggested by the quantitative results (Denscombe, 2010, p.346).

Carrying out research among young people raises ethical issues. Here, I outline the issues and the measures I took so that "no one should suffer harm" (Denscombe, 2010, p.7). With the full support and consent of parents, the comprehensive school is committed to research principles through its collaboration with the Faculty of Education. I obtained permission for the research from the class teacher, and informed pupils of the investigation and its purposes. All data would be stored safely and kept confidential. In this final report, data has been fully anonymised. If safeguarding issues arose during data collection, school procedure would be followed. Participation in questionnaires

and interviews was not compulsory, and pupils were able to withdraw from the process. Further, I signed the Cambridge Ethics form, read, and followed, BERA (2014) guidelines prior to the investigation. Throughout the project, I communicated with subject lecturers, my mentor and the school's Professional Tutor to ensure at all times the research was ethical and "doing the most positive good" (Wilson & Stutchbury, 2009, p.69).

Intervention

I based my resources for the Group Talk intervention on Wildern School's progression table for Group Talk, online resources such as from Hawkes, and on the principles of scaffolding and progression.

Lessons

Across six weeks, I taught six lessons following the school's SoW and within this framework introduced Group Talk activities, which formed part of the 75-minute lessons (see Table 2).

Intervention Schedule	
	Pre-intervention survey
Lesson 1	Introduce Group Talk vocabulary
Lesson 2	Group Talk 1 (30 minutes)
Lesson 3	Group Talk 2 (20 minutes)
Lesson 4	Group Talk 3 (20 minutes)
Lesson 5	Group Talk 4 (20 minutes)
Lesson 6	Assessment, post-intervention survey, reflective questionnaire, group interviews

Table 2: Intervention Schedule

To create a collaborative environment, each group was responsible for their resources and work. Students voted on the next discussion topic following Group Talk 2, allowing student-led learning. In the last two lessons, themes from the SoW were integrated into the activities. The intervention structure is outlined in Table 3.

This structure stems from the literature review's findings. It was important to establish clear rules and objectives to facilitate student-led learning. However, given the novel nature of group work for this class, behavioural issues arose and introducing the activities took longer than anticipated. For

example, the first intervention took the duration of the whole lesson, save a vocabulary test. This began to highlight a tension between the Group Talk interventions and the SoW, and the medium-term plan had to be adjusted accordingly.

Intervention structure	
Title slide	Lass uns auf Deutsch reden! (title to be copied into exercise books)
Objectives slide	Objectives: • to develop confidence to speak more in German! • to practise expressing opinions and giving reasons
Slide to explain the rules	Die Regeln: 1. Nominate a group leader 2. Each person in your group should get the chance to talk 3. Try! It doesn't matter if it's wrong 4. Whoever is holding the German flag speaks 5. No English!
Vocabulary/structure work	E.g. practising pronunciation, matching up vocabulary
Moving into groups for activities	Grouping choices outlined in next section
Handing out Group Talk packs	Contents: • German flag to pass between participants to encourage "only TL" rule • Vocabulary flash cards • Sheet outlining structure of conversation • (from intervention 3) English support sheet • Self-evaluations
Modelling discussion	Using picture stimuli on slide
Approx. five minutes of conversation	Teacher monitoring and helping pupils
Feedback from groups	Groups 'present' a conversation in front of rest of class
Filling in self-evaluation sheets	Reflection on group talk activity to be stuck in books

Table 3: Intervention structure

Reducing state anxiety through altering the social and physical environment was a key finding of the literature review. To create the groups, I asked each pupil to write down one person they would like to work with, and used this information to create eight groups. These were based on friendship and a mix of genders: for most groups, I paired two girls with two boys. I asked the class teacher for advice, and she suggested that certain pupils should be in different groups for behavioural reasons. The new groups led to adjustments in the seating plans in the class' two classrooms. I decided to

keep the horseshoe layout of the one and the rows of the other, as students could easily move to sit together for the Group Talk activities (See Appendix 1 for an outline of the groups and seating plans).

Assessment

The final speaking assessment focussed on evaluating the impact of Group Talk activities on spontaneity and interaction in speaking. Here, the role of accuracy in speech must also be considered. Accuracy is important, since inaccuracies can cause misunderstanding. However, the assessment criteria at GCSE (AQA, 2015a) do give more weight to spontaneity, interaction and communication than accuracy, as do the school's outcomes for speaking in German in Year 8. Further, pupils may experience anxiety or fear of 'getting it wrong', anxiety which the project desired to reduce. The final assessment was the first speaking assessment for these pupils in German, which can often be anxiety-inducing. Pupils were therefore allowed to use support from the four interventions, the aim being to "show me what they had been doing" throughout the project. Being additional to the requirements of the SoW, it was not 'formally' marked, although it did inform teacher assessment grades.

The school's mark scheme was used to give an indicative grade. At the point of the intervention, the pupils had covered only one tense, so were not able to achieve the highest grade band. During the assessment, I recorded the conversations for later analysis. Although the length of conversations was not consistent, I took the first two minutes, and listened for the frequency of the features outlined in Table 4, to compare the final speaking assessment with a mid-intervention recording for Group 6. Spontaneity was measured as when pupils talked about subjects which were not provided as stimuli for conversation.

Feature	**Frequency**
Complexity of language	
No. of full sentences (inc. QUs)	
Accurate sentences (inc. QUs)	
How many different adjectives?	
Intensifiers?	
Connectivies?	
Interaction	
Questions	
Agreement/Disagreement	
Use of names	
Spontaneity	
Pronunciation	
Words mis-pronounced	
Other languages	

Table 4: Assessment criteria for Group Talk activities

Questionnaires

Questionnaires can effectively survey many people to find out both facts and opinions, (Denscombe, 2010, p.157) through direct and indirect questions (p.163). I devised pre- and post-intervention attitudinal questionnaires (see Appendix 2) to measure changes in attitude and perception over time. I also asked pupils to complete a reflective questionnaire post-intervention (see Appendix 3) which was specifically about their experiences and attitudes towards the group speaking activities. 20 pupils filled out both the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire, which, given that the class contained 30 pupils, means the data I received may not be fully representative. However, for the sake of consistency and data triangulation, I focussed on these 20 pupils.

Throughout, I aimed to target questions to Year 8 pupils, wording them to avoid ambiguity (Denscombe, 2010, p.163). Further, I used web-based questionnaires, which, according to Denscombe, gather more accurate data (p.159). I followed good practice guidelines, avoiding leading questions by asking for reactions to statements. Both positive and negative statements were used to minimise the likelihood that pupils would answer arbitrarily or to please me, as their teacher. Finally, I monitored the order of questions to reduce the effect of their sequence influencing pupils' answers (Denscombe, p.165).

The questionnaires contained open and closed questions since closed questions are easy to quantify and compare, but respondents cannot express the fullness of their opinion (Denscombe, 2010, p.166). For example, on SurveyMonkey, I created questions with a 'slider' which allowed pupils to place their opinion at any point between 0 and 100. This question type is based on the *Likert* scale. Pupils were also asked to rank language skills according to difficulty and answered questions with a list of options, such as how frequently they spoke German in class (see Appendix 3). Closed questions about attitudinal stances tended to be followed by an open question asking pupils to comment on their answers. Upon reading these answers, I coded emergent themes.

The questionnaires were not anonymous, to enable measurement of change and data triangulation. Further, the nature of such a small sample size and my position as the class teacher meant that a truly anonymous questionnaire was unlikely. Pupils were asked to be honest but it is possible that they did not fully express their views due to my position as their teacher. Nonetheless, all data included in this essay has been fully anonymised, with the original data kept confidential.

Interviews

I carried out two group interviews, one with a group of five boys (B2, B5, B6, B8, B13), the other with five girls (G3, G9, G12, G14, G16), to gain a deeper understanding of the pupils' feelings of confidence, attainment and the Group Talk activities (Denscombe, 2010, p.174). Participants were chosen from pre-intervention questionnaire data, self-evaluations and teacher observation. I interviewed a representative from each "Group Talk" group, as well as pupils with a range of abilities and stances towards learning German. The interviews were semi-structured, covering certain topics, but with flexibility to deviate according to pupils' responses (see Appendix 4). Group interviews increase the number of voices and range of views, which can aid the representativeness of the data (p.176) and allow participants to listen and respond to each other's views, increasing involvement (p.177). However, it is possible that peer pressure swayed opinion or did not allow certain opinions to be expressed.

The interviewer's role is vital; they need to be attentive and sensitive to the feelings of the participants, prompting where necessary (Denscombe, 2010, p.182-3). The "interviewer effect" (p.178) is also significant in affecting a participant's response. In this case, as I was undertaking Action Research, participants saw me as their teacher and I felt, as their teacher, more personally involved in the discussion. As with the questionnaires, I asked pupils to be honest and made it clear

that what they said would have no repercussions. The range of positive and negative opinion provided by the informants at interview indicates that this was successful. However, by checking the interview data against other sources, I will be able to see if it is corroborated (p.189).

Limitations of the research

Denscombe (2010) highlights the issues of generalising from Action Research (p.133), which is context-specific and cannot claim universally applicability. However, he shows that it can inform other knowledge by drawing on existing theories and using appropriate research methods (p.134). Bearing this limitation of the research methodology in mind, and the limitations of each method, attention now turns to the results of my research project.

Results

RQ1: To what extent do group talk activities impact confidence in speaking?

Quantitative data

To address this research question, I first evaluated the pupil's confidence in speaking pre- and post-intervention through the attitudinal questionnaire. Pupils were asked to rate their confidence in speaking (See Appendix 2, Q7), as displayed in Figure 1.

Each of the 30 pupils in the class were coded as G or B (girl or boy) and assigned a number. Figure 1 presents results for only the 20 pupils who completed both questionnaires. There seem to be several striking increases in confidence, namely G6, G7 and B12. However, there also seem to be more pupils whose confidence post-intervention has dropped a similar amount or more. In terms of the spread of the data, Table 5 shows that the median and mean averages suggest a decrease in confidence across the group, particularly for boys.

This seems to be corroborated by the box-plots in Figure 2, which show the change in spread pre- and post-intervention.

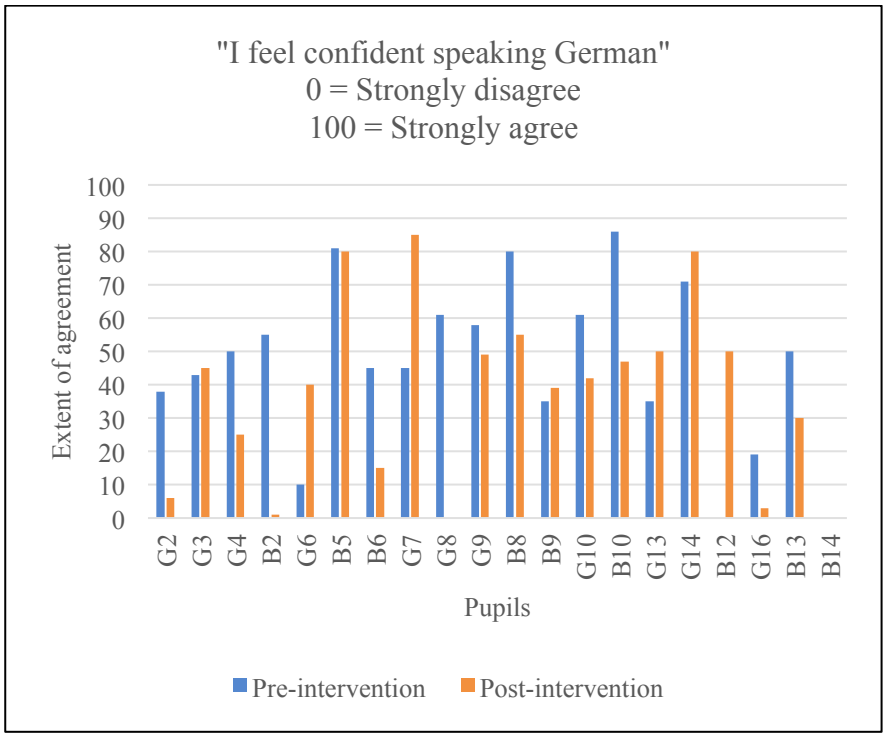

Figure 1: Pupil response to "I feel confident speaking German" pre- and post-intervention

Q7: I feel confident speaking German. 0 = Strongly disagree 100 = Strongly agree		
	Pre-intervention questionnaire	**Post-intervention questionnaire**
Range	86	85
Median	47.5	41
Boys' median	50	39
Girls' median	45	42
Mean	46.15	37.1
Boys' mean	48	35.22
Girls' mean	44.64	38.68

Table 5: Spread of data in response to question "I feel confident in German"

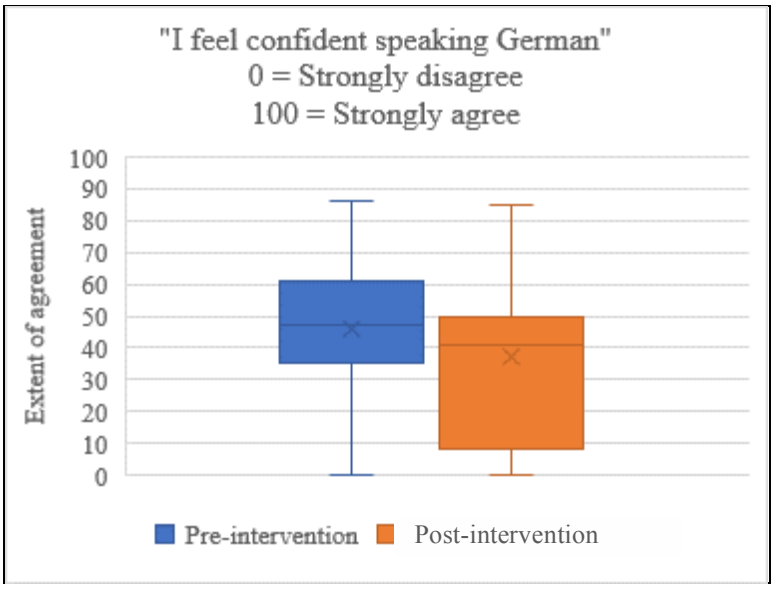

Figure 2: Box plots showing range and spread of data for the question "I feel confident in German"

A paired t-test allows the evaluation of whether this apparent decrease in confidence is statistically significant, at the $p<0.05$ level. I used a two-tailed threshold to detect either a positive or negative change (working shown in Table 6).

mean difference	-9.05
absolute mean difference	9.05
standard deviation of differences	29.12672
standard error of the mean difference	6.512932
T_{obs} (observed t-statistic of samples)	1.389543
T_{thres} (two-tailed t-statistic threshold at p=0.05 for 20 samples)	2.093024

Table 6: Working for paired t-test

Since $T_{obs} < T_{thres}$, no statistically significant effect was detected, either positive or negative. This test assumes an approximate normal distribution of result differences, and if the intervention were implemented across a larger sample size, the results would be more indicative.

So far, the data seems inconclusive. However, triangulation with data from Q7 of the reflective questionnaire post-intervention (see Appendix 3) may provide more insight. This four-point Likert scale meant pupils had to be decisive about the impact of the group speaking activities.

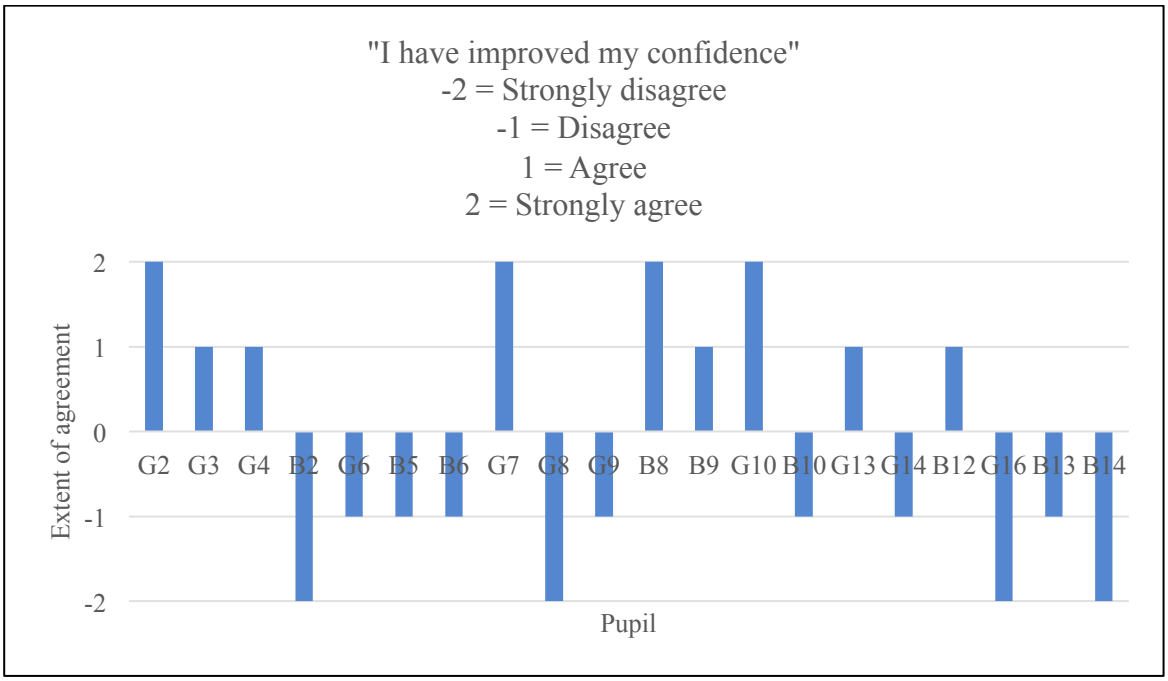

Figure 3: Pupil response to question "I have improved my confidence"

Figure 3 shows that nine of the twenty students agree they have improved their confidence. G7's experience in particular seems to be positive for her confidence, triangulating her data across sources. G2, B8 and G10 also "strongly agree" with the statement, and it would seem Group Talk activities had a positive impact on their confidence. Eleven of twenty pupils do not agree with the statement, but note that the wording of this question does not necessarily imply the opposite: a perceived confidence decrease. Still, the fact that four pupils strongly disagreed with the statement may suggest a negative attitude towards the intervention.

The data presented so far shows the difficulty of measuring a concept like confidence in a quantitative manner. Further, it cannot answer the most important question to the teacher researcher: *why* it is that some pupils seem to have improved their confidence, while others feel the opposite.

Qualitative data

Question 8 in the post-intervention reflection asked pupils to explain their response to the statement "I feel confident speaking German", an open question providing qualitative data (see Appendix 3). Through coding the data according to emergent themes, it seemed that beliefs about confidence in

speaking were highly affected by perceptions of competence (see Table 7). This was particularly true for those not highly confident.

Pupil G16	very low confidence	"I have only just started really learning German I don't feel confident. This is because I don't know that much German."
Pupil B8	average confidence	"I don't know much of the language and so I feel that I can't sustain a conversation which makes me feel a little less confident. Also I find it bad as I may slip up and people may not understand my pronunciation."

Table 7: Perceptions of competence

In Table 7, B8 highlights a further reason for low confidence: the fear of getting it wrong, shared by two other pupils. G9 adds: "I am confident but also not as I worry if I pronounce something wrong." The social setting also impacts on confidence: G7 explains, "I feel very confident and comfortable speaking German because of the group work we did." This statement is in line with other data from G7, for whom the intervention seems to have had a positive impact in terms of confidence. Two further pupils show a dislike for speaking in front of the class, preferring small groups. Table 8 presents the frequency of different themes emergent from the data.

Theme	**Frequency**
Competence	11
Social setting	3
Fear of getting it wrong	3
Dislike	2
Boredom	1
Enjoyment	1
Self-esteem	1

Table 8: Emergent themes for response to question "I feel confident speaking German"

This data does not compare attitudes pre- and post-intervention, so cannot fully evaluate the impact of Group Talk activities on confidence, except where G7 directly refers to the group work increasing her confidence. However, it does suggest that self-perceptions of competence are important to confidence in speaking, as proposed by the WTC model.

In the two group interviews pupils gave more insight into the impact of the activities on confidence. G12 was chosen because of her pre-intervention questionnaire, but was unfortunately unable to complete the post-intervention questionnaire and has not been included thus far in the data.

However, in the girls' interview, she was the most positive towards the impact of the intervention on her confidence, saying "it's made me more confident… instead of like speaking it out loud to everyone." Here, the theme of feeling more confident in groups than in front of the class arises again. G3 also found that working in groups helped her confidence, although she still did not feel very confident explaining that she "just needed to learn more of the words," highlighting the importance of state perceived competence as well as state anxiety in creating state self-confidence. G9 similarly explained she was not confident because "because I don't really know anything."

In the boys' interview, B8 viewed the ability to express opinions as an important language skill, and practising this increased his confidence:

> *"Saying opinions makes up a large amount of what we do in life, I mean we're always making decisions on things… if you have to sit there and talk to a German person and they don't know a word of English, being able to ask their opinion, starting some small talk, that's a good way to start it."*

He also realises that confidence in speaking means you can use language meaningfully: "You can't just write something down and then go to a market stall and hand it to someone, you actually have to have the confidence to speak to someone." This pupil was able to make the link between the activities and using the language in "real-life". However, G9 felt the opposite, shown in the dialogue in Table 9 from the girls' interview.

Teacher-interviewer:	How about you [G3], how did you find it?
Pupil G3:	I think it was good, I think there should be more categories, like different things to talk about.
Pupil G9:	Yeah, sort of like what you'd say if you were like asking something, like in the shop. Say you went to Germany, like I am, um, then you want to like ask them: Please can I have this? How much is this? That sort of stuff.

Table 9: Dialogue from girls' interview

For an upcoming visit to Germany, she felt the language covered by Group Talk had not sufficiently prepared her for everyday communication.

The intervention did seem to positively impact the confidence of some interviewees, as suggested by the quantitative data. However, the possible negative effect also seemed corroborated, with the grouping of pupils an important factor. G14 said, "It's not that I'm not confident, it's just that I

haven't had the chance to talk." She was a member of Group 3 (see Appendix 1), and the other members of her group did not participate in the tasks. Friendship with members of her group did not help: "It's not that I'm not friends with the people in my group, it's just that we never do anything [together]." To gain insight into this lack of participation in Group 3, B2 was interviewed. He showed a general negative attitude to German and lack of motivation, beginning the interview by saying the group activities were "really (x11) boring." He then expressed further negative attitudes to German, "don't do German at all, get rid of it" and showed a lack of motivation to even participate in the interview: "Miss, do you know X has a girlfriend?" It would seem that B2's negative attitude made group work much more difficult and less enjoyable for the normally participative and high achieving G14. B5 seemed to have a similar experience, expressing annoyance at his group because they "didn't do any work". Both these pupils wanted to work, but were held back by demotivated class members in their groups. The experience does not, however, seem to have negatively affected either pupil's confidence.

In contrast, B6, whose group contained three girls (Group 1), mentioned his dissatisfaction with this four times during the interview and seemed unable to overcome this barrier. He felt his situation was unjust, which negatively impacted his attitude to learning, and by extension, his confidence. G9 had also not been placed with her friends, and found that as a result she felt less comfortable speaking, adding, "if it was with my friends it'd be fine." Although G16 was happy that she was in a group with her friend, the group dynamics in her group, Group 2, still seemed to have a negative impact on her confidence. The two boys in her group annoyed her, "the whole time". Further, she felt that her group did not collaborate, but worked in two pairs: "I felt like they were just talking to each other and me and [G2] were talking to each other." G14's comment on grouping and the experience of the different members of the class seems particularly pertinent here: "It depends who you are… there's lots of different people."

When asked whether they wished to continue the group speaking activities (see Appendix 3, Q10), eight pupils of twenty said "yes", eight "maybe" and only "four" no, three of whom were in Group 3, which, as shown above, had a particularly negative experience. This suggests that while students may not be hugely enthusiastic about the speaking activities, most do see some benefit in them. In coding the emergent themes arising from the follow-up question "Why/Why not?", six pupils alluded to the activities aiding their learning in some way, with three of these pupils saying that it helped them with learning vocabulary. Four pupils mentioned boredom as a factor, suggesting that

the activities were not very engaging, as B13 highlighted, he did not want to continue the activities "because they are quite repetitive and quite boring". Finally, six pupils mentioned that if they were to continue doing the activities, they would like a change in group, suggesting this was a significant issue for this class. G9, for example, said she would like to continue doing the activities "because I want to gain my confidence but I would like a different group". She sees potential for Group Talk to increase her confidence in the long term, even if it has not thus far.

Perceptions of competence: quantitative perspective

As has been seen from the literature and data so far, issues of competence seem to intertwine closely with confidence. Pupils were asked two quantitative questions in the pre- and post-intervention attitudinal questionnaire, which may corroborate this hypothesis. In Q5, pupils ranked the four language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking in order of difficulty (See Appendix 2). B14 skipped this question in completing the post-intervention questionnaire, so his data is not included for the purposes of comparison. Figure 4 displays the results of this question, pre- and post-intervention.

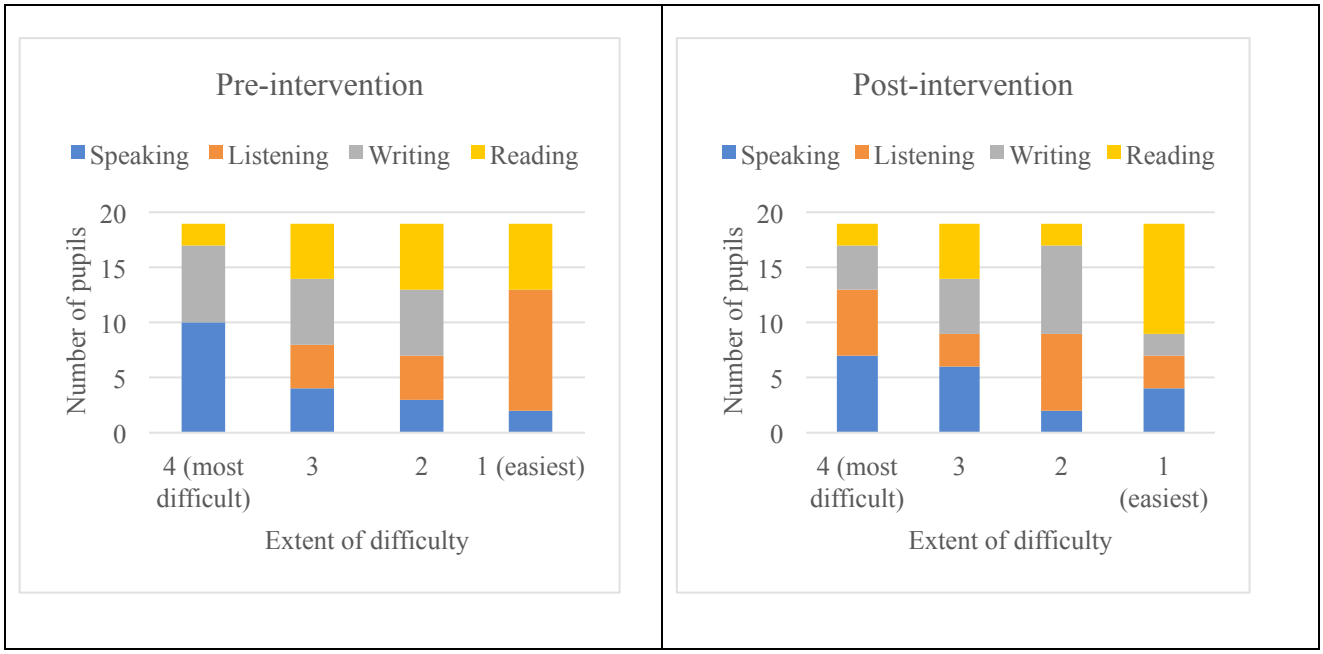

Figure 4: Ranking of language skills pre- and post-intervention

Pre-intervention, more than half (10 of 19) pupils felt speaking was the most difficult skill, whereas post-intervention this decreased to seven out of 19 pupils. This may suggest that pupils are less

daunted by speaking than before Group Talk. However, simply having more speaking practice during the intervention could account for this change.

To see how pupils perceived their participation in German in class, perhaps an indicator of competence, the answers to Q6 (see Appendix 2) were analysed (see Figure 5).

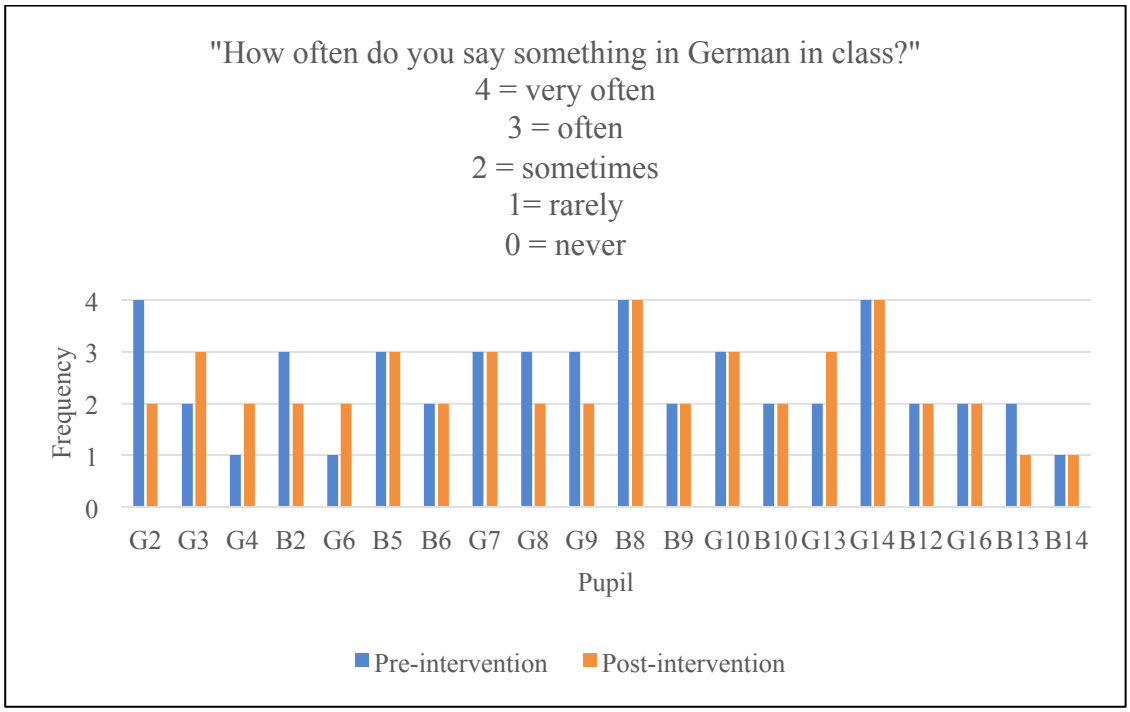

Figure 5: Response to "How often do you say something in German in class?"

Most pupils saw no change in their participation (11 of 20), four saw an increase and five saw a drop. At this sample size, it is impossible to generalise whether pupils felt they participated more or less after the Group Talk activities.

RQ1: Summary

The data gathered for this RQ does not paint a clear picture, as confidence is difficult to measure quantitatively. However, it does seem that, at least qualitatively, perceptions of confidence impact confidence. It is possible that pupils found speaking less daunting post-intervention. It seems clear that the activities were a positive experience for some pupils, but issues of grouping negatively impacted the experience of others, perhaps reducing their confidence.

RQ2: To what extent do group talk activities impact attainment in speaking?

To address this question, I recorded Group 6's speaking in the second intervention. I took the first two minutes of conversation from the recording and analysed it as outlined in Table 10. I then took the first two minutes of Group 6's final speaking assessment and used the same analysis. Unfortunately, B8 was absent for the first recording, so this makes a direct comparison between the two recordings impossible. Nonetheless, it may provide insight into the pupils' progress.

Complexity of language	**Group 6 – Mid-intervention**	**Group 6 – Final Speaking Assessment (with Pupil B8)**
No. of full sentences (inc qus)	15	8
Accurate sentences (inc qus)	13	7
How many different adjectives?	4	4
Intensifiers?	1	3
Connectives?	0	2
Interaction		
Questions	6	6
Agreement/Disagreement	6	5
Use of names	0	5
Spontaneity	(after 2-minute comparison period, pupils begin talking about other chocolate bars [4 others are mentioned])	(after 2-minute comparison period, B8 introduces topic of geography, encourages others to be spontaneous)
Pronunciation		
Words mis-pronounced	gut (Eng gut)	"finde" (Eng find) (But corrected)
	finde (corrected by other pupil)	
	Was dankst	
	furchtbar	
	Was denkest	
Other languages	Ich finde Dairy Milk c'est super	Eng "that's what I said"
	"C'est?!, ist"	"I don't know"
	French!	

Table 10: Comparison of Group Talk recording mid- and post-intervention

In the final speaking assessment, there are fewer full sentences than during the second intervention. However, a higher proportion of those sentences were accurate. Further, fewer pronunciation errors

were made, a wider variety of language was used and thee more elements of interaction in total. However, during the assessment, B7, G8 and G12 were less vocal: B8 led and dominated the conversation. Beyond the two-minute comparison period, he introduced a spontaneous turn to the conversation by talking about a subject not provided by the stimuli. The lower-attaining pupils seemed to perform better mid-intervention, and used their own initiative to speak spontaneously. During this, conversations and structures had been recently modelled to pupils, whereas in the final speaking assessment, pupils had to remember how to construct the sentences – even if they had some support. In addition, the atmosphere of the final speaking assessment was different to the recording taken in class, despite my best efforts to reduce stress and anxiety. These factors may all have resulted in a seemingly weaker performance in the final speaking assessment than mid-intervention.

During the half-term of teaching the Year 8 group, I tracked their progress in my mark-book and on an online platform. Entering data from the speaking assessments as input for the teacher assessment, and the writing and translation assessment data, I tracked changes in attainment for 24 of the 30 pupils in the class. As Figure 6 illustrates, between 9th February and 1st May 2017, 13 pupils increased one level, for eight pupils there had been no change and four pupils dropped one level.

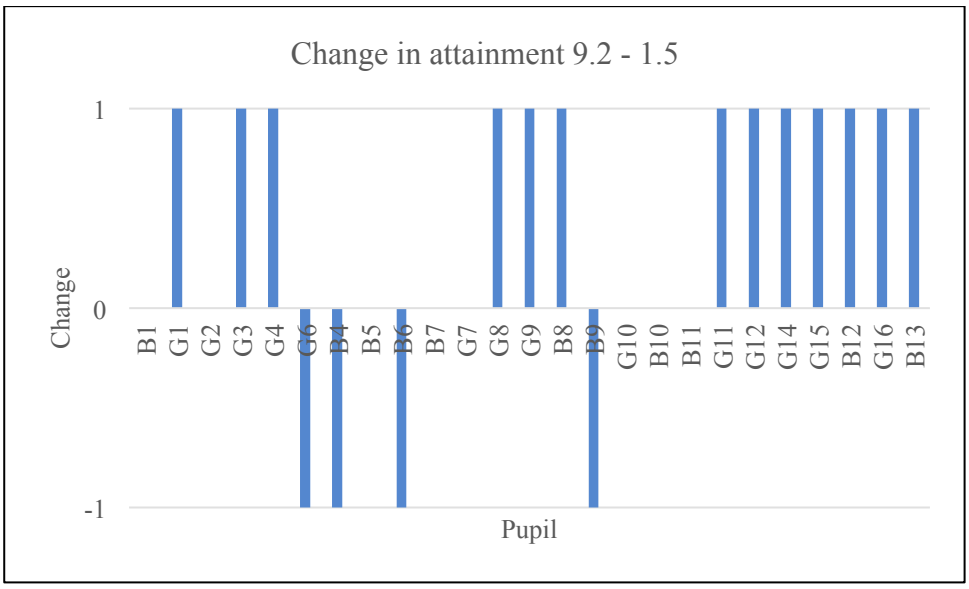

Figure 6: Change in attainment between 9.2.17 and 1.5.17

As pupils were required to complete writing and translation assessments as well as the speaking assessment, I show the grades for each in Figure 7, as this could give some indication of the impact of the activities on attainment in speaking.

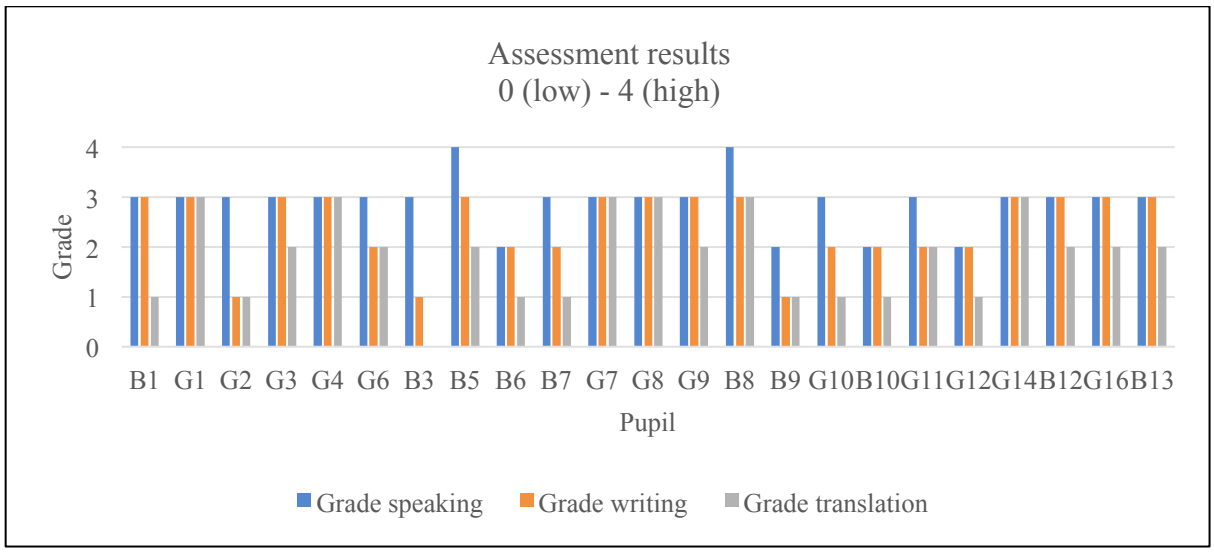

Figure 7: End of term assessment results

Here, it can be seen that the results for speaking are, in general, higher than those for writing and translation. The results for the translation assignment, in particular, seem to be lower than for the speaking and writing assignments.

Discussion

From the literature analysis, group talk was shown to be integral to learning processes and confidence was seen as important in impacting pupils' willingness to communicate. This research therefore aimed to investigate the impact of Group Talk activities in the areas of confidence and attainment. However, owing to the small sample size, much of the gathered data is inconclusive and it is unclear whether the class as a whole benefitted from the activities. The effect on specific pupils is clearer, and themes have emerged which seem applicable to different groups of students across the class.

Following the principles of Group Talk, in setting up the intervention, I aimed to reduce the anxiety of speaking in front of a whole class by creating small groups where pupils could speak confidently and meaningfully with friends, as suggested by Grauberg (1997). In this class, some pupils

mentioned that they found talking in small groups easier than talking in front the whole group, with a few explicitly saying that this made them more confident. However, the difficulty of creating groups taking friendship preferences into account as well as deciding to pair boys with girls resulted in some pupils who were disappointed and unhappy with their group. For two high achieving, participative pupils, being with people who did not want to work was frustrating, although it did not seem to negatively affect their confidence. For other pupils, their disappointment increased over the four interventions, and perhaps negatively impacted confidence. Dissatisfaction with the groupings was a common theme, perhaps also heightened by those perceived to have "got lucky" and been placed with their friends. As the class teacher, when I noticed that the group dynamics were disrupting learning, which began to become clear after the 2nd intervention, I should have changed the groupings, following principles of Action Research which require the practitioner to be proactive.

Reflecting on the findings from the literature review and this investigation, there does not seem to be an obvious way to group pupils. Perhaps it is unwise to try to combine pupil preferences with teacher decision: had I, on the one hand, asked pupils to choose their own groups, or on the other, dictated the groups for everyone, this might have reduced some of the negative effects. In the first case, it would have been clear that some pupils would be disappointed, but it would have not have seemed to be anyone's fault. In the second case, from the point of view of the class, all would have been treated fairly. In addition, this class had not had much experience of group work and were unused to working with different people in the class. Some seemed to lack skills for collaboration, suggesting, as Johnson and Johnson (2009) say, that these skills need more explicit and long-term teaching.

For some, anxiety was reduced by small groups, whereas for others, the frustration of the environment increased anxiety. However, state-anxiety is not the only factor of state self-confidence in the WTC model. State perceived competence is also central, which became evident in this group through the qualitative data gathered. Pupils felt aware of being language learning beginners or "not good" at German. From my perspective as the teacher, I was aware of the challenge I felt to incorporate Group Talk into a SoW, mainly for reasons of timing. As a result, lessons often felt rushed, with a lot of content. This could have heightened pupils' awareness of their competence, or lack thereof, and negatively impacted their confidence. While stretch and challenge is important, if pupils feel what they are being asked to do is unachievable, it is likely they will become

demotivated. If I were to consider implementing Group Talk activities into the classroom again, I would aim to introduce and practice the vocabulary and structures over a longer period, so that pupils felt competent and therefore confident before moving onto more open-ended tasks, as in Pachler et al.'s continuum (2014).

Interestingly, the layout of the two classrooms also seemed to affect the atmosphere in the class. Despite Oxford's (1997) preference for a semi-circle layout, I found the lessons in the classroom with this layout much more disruptive than where the layout was in rows (see Appendix 1). Behaviour issues were particularly problematic here, negatively impacting pupils' learning, and although observation notes suggest that I dealt with this well, they also point to the fact that I needed to refocus on what the pupils were learning.

Turning to issues of attainment, there are indications that some spontaneous language and conversation did occur due to the intervention. Pupils, for the most part, seemed to enjoy the opportunity to give their opinions, especially when they could go 'off-piste'. Christie's (2016) argument for proceduralised knowledge and practice of language chunks also seems to have played a part in helping spontaneity. Interestingly, in their writing assessment, some pupils included elements of the Group Talk activities, possibly because they "knew how" to.

Interaction also seems to have been a feature of Group Talk: there was evidence of pupils interacting in TL in both in mid-intervention and post-intervention recordings. In the mid-intervention recording, pupils seemed more excited and interested to share their opinions, whereas the speaking assessment felt a more artificial environment. In planning opportunities for speaking, teachers need to find a balance between allowing pupils to simulate "real" conversation and preparing pupils to cope with examinations.

Pupils performed well in the speaking assessment, so it seems possible to tentatively conclude that this focus on speaking did impact positively on attainment. However, there were pressures in combining Group Talk and the SoW, especially as pupils also had to complete writing and translation assessments. Perhaps if Group Talk activities were integrated fully into a SoW, this conflict would be reduced. In addition, if they were implemented over a longer period, perhaps with lower frequency, they would not be as disruptive. In MFL pupils need a wide range of skills, which require different types of practice. It is perhaps no surprise that with more speaking practice, pupils performed well in a speaking assessment. However, some students commented that the activities

did improve their ability to retain vocabulary, for example. Therefore, it would seem that speaking practice can facilitate wider learning.

Conclusion

This research cannot make generalisations, but certain themes could provide insight to my future professional practice and that of other classroom practitioners. Embarking on group work in the classroom is not necessarily easy, especially when pupils are unused to it. Pupils need to learn to work together collaboratively; in this Year 8 class, some were able, whereas others could not overcome the social barriers. Therefore, teachers need to carefully consider how they introduce group work to the classroom and the amount of time they dedicate to it. It appears that some pupils benefit, especially those who dislike speaking in front of a large group of people. Nonetheless, teachers need to be adaptable to stop or change group work, recognising signs of tension and negativity. In addition, new activities should be structured with care, ensuring that pupils are not overwhelmed, but given the appropriate amount of support and challenge. It seems important that pupils can feel competent and achieving, as this impacts their confidence.

While I would not implement Group Talk in exactly the same way again, there are certain principles I will take forward. Speaking is important in MFL, and often neglected in the classroom. When pupils practise speaking, not only are they practising communication, they also embed the language, which suggests benefits to attainment in speaking, and further in other linguistic skills. Additionally, I will need to consider the difficult balance of communication and accuracy. To prepare students for the GCSE examinations, both are required, as they are for life-long, independent language learning. The appeal of Group Talk activities is that students are not restricted by SoWs and learning to the test but can communicate with "real" meaning. I experienced difficulties introducing Group Talk activities, especially in the short period of time of the intervention, and it seems that pupils need to learn independence, collaboration and cooperation over a longer time. However, I am encouraged that it is worth pursuing an ethos of group work in the classroom. It may not happen automatically, and may not always be appropriate, but if done with care and reflection, there seems to be potential for allowing pupils' voices to become a normal part of classroom discourse, giving them the confidence and the ability to speak.

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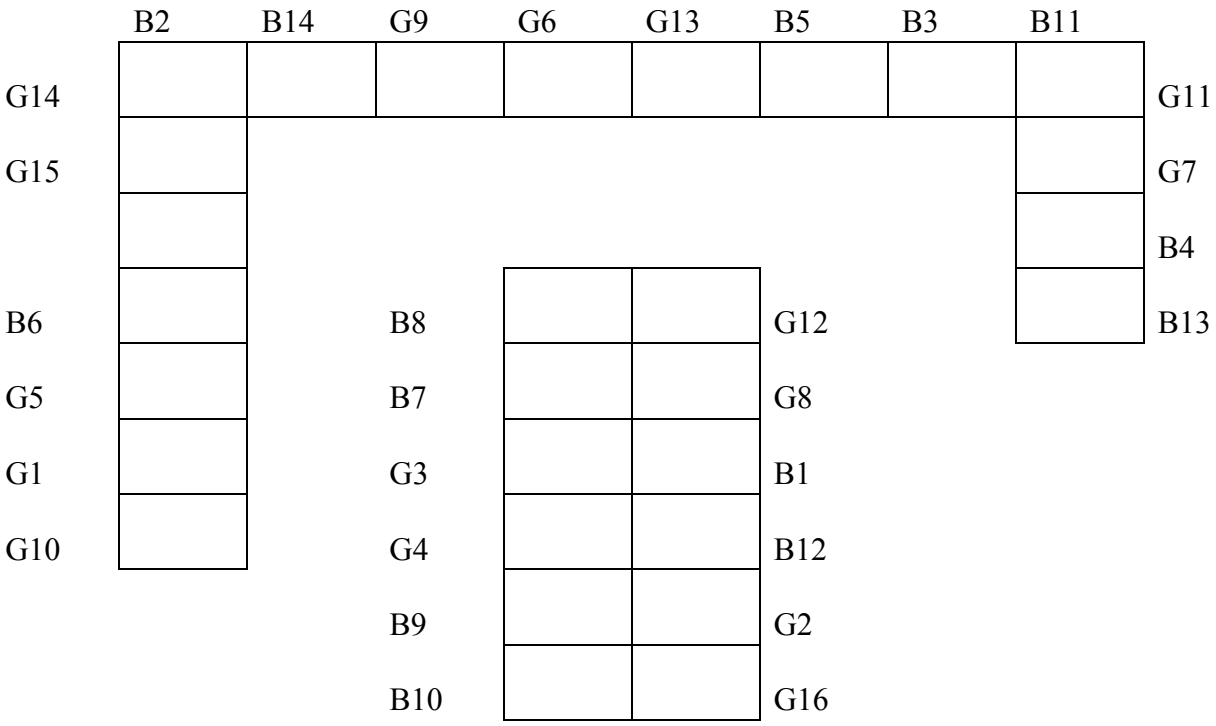
Appendix 1

Class grouping and seating plans

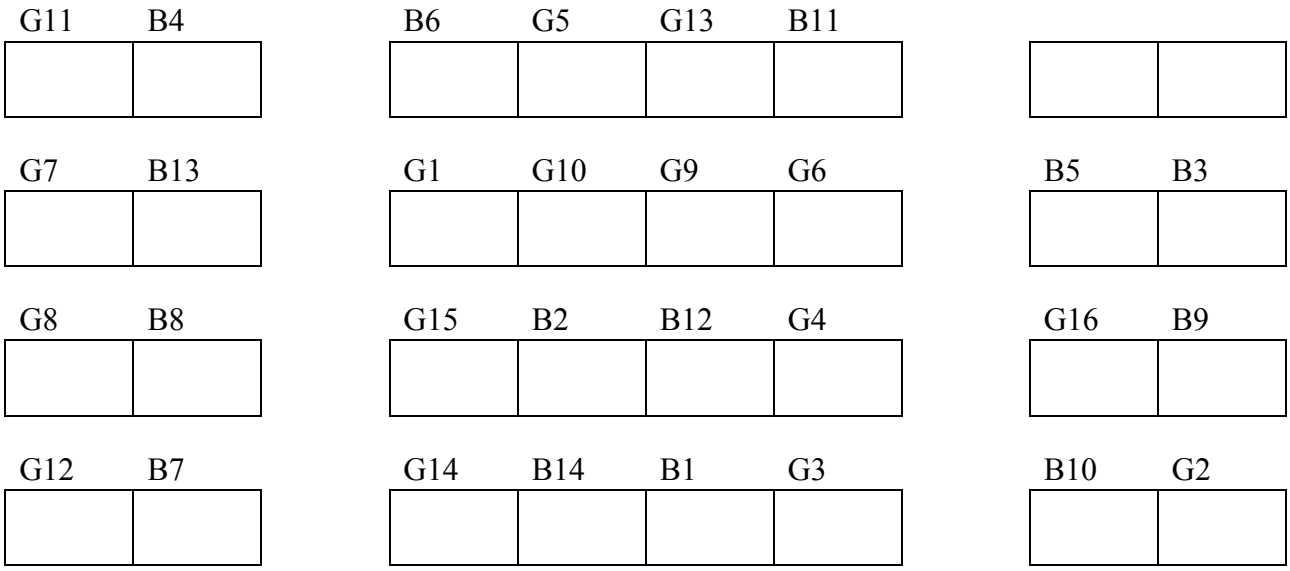
Grouping

Group	**Pupils**			
Group 1	G10	G1	G5	B6
Group 2	G2	G16	B9	B10
Group 3	G15	G14	B2	B14
Group 4	B12	B1	G3	G4
Group 5	B13	B4	G7	G11
Group 6	G12	G8	B7	B8
Group 7	G13	G9	G6	
Group 8	B5	B3	B11	

Seating plan: Room 1



Seating plan: Room 2



Appendix 2

Pre- and post-intervention attitudinal questionnaire

Pre-intervention questionnaire = "What do you think about German?" Post-intervention questionnaire = "How do you feel about German at the moment?"		
No.	**Question**	**Answer type**
1	What is your name?	Comment box
2	I love German.	Slider (0 = Strongly disagree, 100 = Strongly agree)
3	I find German difficult.	Slider (0 = Strongly disagree, 100 = Strongly agree)
4	I am good at German.	Slider (0 = Strongly disagree, 100 = Strongly agree)
5	Which of these skills do you find the easiest? (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing)	Ranking: (1 = the easiest, 4 = the most difficult)
6	How often do you say something in German in class?	Choice: very often, often, sometimes, rarely, never
7	I feel confident speaking German.	Slider (0 = Strongly disagree, 100 = Strongly agree)
8	Can you explain your answer to Q7?*	Comment box
9	What would help you speak more German in class?	Comment box
10	Finish the sentence: "German is…"	Comment box
*A typing error in the pre-intervention attitudinal questionnaire meant that only a small proportion of the total participants responded to this question.		

Appendix 3

Post-intervention reflective questionnaire

What have you learned from the speaking activities we've been doing in class?		
No.	**Question**	**Answer type**
1	What is your name?	Comment box
2	I participated well in the group speaking activities.	Slider (0 = Strongly disagree, 100 = Strongly agree)
3	What helped you participate well or what stopped you from participating?	Comment box
4	I didn't enjoy the group speaking activities.	Slider (0 = Strongly disagree, 100 = Strongly agree)
5	Can you tell me why you did or didn't enjoy the group speaking activities?	Comment box
6	These are some new words/phrases that I've used:	Comment box
7	I have improved my: Ability to say sentences Pronunciation Confidence Ability to give my opinion Other (please specify)	Choice of "Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree" for each option.
8	Rank the speaking activities: Talking about celebrities Talking about chocolate Talking about sports people Talking about pets	Ranking (1 = the best, 4 = the worst)
9	Tell me one thing you will remember from doing these activities:	Comment box
10	Would you like to continue doing group speaking activities?	Choice: Yes, No, Maybe Comment box: "Why/why not?"

Appendix 4

Interview schedule

Interview questions

1. What do you think about German?
    a. How do you find lessons?
    b. Which activities do you like/dislike?
2. Do you feel like you can say things in German in front of other people in class? Why/why not?
3. What do you find hardest about speaking German?
4. How have you found the group talk activities?
    a. What have you liked/disliked?
    b. What has been difficult/easy?
    c. Has it helped you with German? If so, how? If not, why?
    d. Has your German improved?
    e. How would you rate your confidence now in comparison to before we started doing the speaking activities?
    f. Is there anything you would change about the activities?

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